



**Voice of the
Listener & Viewer**

Bulletin

Working for Quality and Diversity in Broadcasting

Summer 2009

Issue 97

LAUNCH OF A CITIZENS' COALITION FOR PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

VLV has taken an initiative to spearhead growing public concern about the future of UK broadcasting in the wake of Lord Carter's Digital Britain Report.

In the run-up to publication we convened a meeting of approximately 40 of Britain's leading voluntary organisations and bodies concerned with media issues. This was held at the headquarters of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and opened by its chief executive **Stuart Etherington**.

Speaking to the theme of the meeting, which sought to highlight the threats to plurality in public service broadcasting (PSB), he said: 'As in all areas of public service we believe that there should be a wide range of providers, as this allows for a diversity of views.'

The NCVO chief went on to stress the importance of PSB plurality to campaigners. 'Messages of public benefit may also be less likely to be taken forward by organisations driven by a profit motive. So it is on public service broadcasters that more controversial campaigns are discussed. Campaigning is a fundamental part of the work of voluntary organisations as this is the basis for legislative change on crucial issues. It is best served by a diversity of public service broadcasters.'

The meeting then discussed the current challenges to plurality in PSB,

particularly the funding outlook for Channel 4 and the security of BBC funding. A wide range of views came from the floor and there was support for the idea of financing public service programme content by imposing levies on all those telecoms companies, internet service providers, pay television providers and hardware manufacturers, who benefit from the public service broadcasters.

During the course of the two-hour discussion a consensus emerged that there was a serious threat to the future of UK broadcasting and that a campaign to challenge these trends, from the citizens' perspective, should be launched.

Calling itself the Citizens' Coalition for Public Service Broadcasting, the group, with some financial backing from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust and chaired by VLV board member **Ivor Gaber**, aims to launch a public campaign with a manifesto that commits it to campaign to:

- Alert civil society — and the public in general — to the threat posed to Britain's democracy and social fabric by the erosion of plurality in public service broadcasting.

- Ensure the voices of civil society groups and citizens are heard in the debate.

- Ensure that any future commitments to plurality in public service broadcasting do not threaten the independence, integrity or security of funding of the BBC.

Forthcoming events

Wednesday, 7 October

**VLV Celebrates at BAFTA
25 years of campaigning
for the best in
British broadcasting**

BAFTA has generously donated its glamorous Piccadilly headquarters for VLV to celebrate its 25th anniversary — and 25 years of the programmes that have made British broadcasting the best in the world.

Join the television and radio stars, the programme makers and the broadcasters, to cheer the top twenty-five programmes from the past, and help fund VLV's campaign to maintain quality in the new media world. At 195 Piccadilly, London W1 6.30-8.30pm Tickets £80.

Thursday, 12 November

15th Annual Conference of the VLV
Forum for Children's Broadcasting

**Brave New World?
Children's Media
Beyond Television**
(details p.5)

Thursday, 26 November

VLV's 27th Annual Autumn
Conference.

**End of the BBC's
Licence Fee monopoly?**

As the General Election looms Shadow Secretary of State Jeremy Hunt tells VLV members the Conservative way ahead. At the Geological Society, Piccadilly, London W1.

See Diary Dates p.8

- Support all broadcasters, and other programme suppliers, who are committed to providing PSB content.

- Encourage the British public, opinion leaders, UK Government departments, and all branches of the digital industries to accept and introduce a fair and equitable method of providing additional financial support for non-BBC public service broadcasting.

Inside

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on Digital Britain**

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British Television**

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Scottish Conferences
and Visits**

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■ **Diary dates**



Voice of the Listener & Viewer

Working for Quality and Diversity in British Broadcasting

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Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV) represents the citizen and consumer interests in broadcasting and works for quality and diversity in British broadcasting. VLV is free from political, sectarian and commercial affiliations. VLV is concerned with the issues, structures, institutions and regulation that underpin the British broadcasting system and in particular to maintain the principles of public service broadcasting. VLV does not handle complaints.

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WHAT IS TO BECOME OF BRITISH TELEVISION?

Several conflicting views about the future of British Television were aired at the Big Broadcasting Debate held in London under the combined auspices of VLV, The Media Society and YouGovStone (YGS) on 9 June. Despite the tube strike the room was bursting at the seams and buzzing with expectation having attracted several celebrity attendees — including **Rory Bremner** and **Tom Conti**.



*An evening
attended by
Tom Conti*

After a welcome there was a summary of new research about the issues conducted by YGS, for this event, with their 'influentials' from the media industry. This shows that these opinion leaders over-estimate the public's assessment of the value for money the licence fee provides, and want a high level of continued commitment to public service broadcasting funding, particularly in news, documentaries and children's programmes. The fact that as many as 45% are prepared to consider a complete revamp of the system to allow all channels to bid for licence fee funding sounded a warning which resonated throughout the debate.

Chaired by **Richard Lindley** the proceedings went with a swing despite the loss of a panellist, **David Elstein**, due to a broken down car on the A40. He was missed, particularly for his uncompromising view that the licence fee should be abolished. However, three presentations from the distinguished panellists provided just the right mix of polemic, hard-headed analysis and crowd pleasing anecdotes.

Nick Ross suggested that only an ill-conceived nostalgia amongst the over 40s promotes the view that things are getting worse for British TV. He argued for a new 'mixed economy' where a central pot

of licence fee money could be awarded to bidding organisations on an investment basis, in the manner of the Arts Council.

Laurence Marks argued that the future of TV is based on smaller audiences being a fact of life, and that programmes could not expect to have the same level of investment as in the past, thus placing a premium on good ideas. He felt the licence fee is good value if only to pay for the excellent BBC radio stations 4 and 5 which are each other's main competition.

Peter Bazalgette said that British TV had long enjoyed the unsustainably high levels of investment and proposed several routes to maintain quality, including cutting BBC management and administrative costs and allowing product placement. Genuine plurality, with money going to all manner of minority channels (such as Tate and ENO), has to be the way forward, and investment in talent is critical to ensuring continuing quality in the future.

Questions were taken from the floor but no clear formula for future funding decisions was articulated. Generally there seemed to be openness to a new bidding-based form of plurality, though the most popular option chosen by the 'influentials' was to continue with the flat-rate licence fee.

Steve Hewlett warned against the dangers of committee-style commissioning of programmes and the malign effects of political influence was emphasised. VLV's Professor **Sylvia Harvey** spoke up for PSB as critical to the health of democracy, and Google was discussed as both a dangerous competitor and a possible partner for the future. The radical impact of new technology was mentioned at various points, but concern was expressed that the Digital Britain Report is more about the 'pipes' than the 'poetry'.

In summing up, Richard Lindley focused on the centrality of maintaining content quality and emphasised the timeliness and importance of the debate. It would be fair to say that a good time was had by all and that a diverse audience had been fully engaged with the issues.

MELANIE HOWARD

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



**PSB
needs
more
not
less
funding**

When Communications Minister Stephen Carter's Digital Britain Report appeared on 16 June, VLV set about trying to absorb a long and complicated document and respond in a speedy and sensible way. This was what we came up with.

Press Release

Voice of the Listener & Viewer has today voiced its concerns over plans to build a 'contained contestable element' into the BBC Licence Fee, so that from 2013 commercial broadcasters would have access to part of it.

Chairman Richard Lindley said: 'We are glad to see that Digital Britain so clearly supports a strong, independent BBC in the digital age. However, the proposal to top-slice 3.5% from the Licence Fee to fund other broadcasters or services after Digital Switchover in 2012 represents an erosion of the BBC's funding base.

Lord Carter says he wants the BBC to remain the gold standard, but VLV is worried that one slice of the Licence Fee will lead to another — and ultimately damage the BBC's independence and programmes. However, we welcome his commitment to consult on this proposal. Listeners and viewers who pay the fee must be at the heart of that debate.

With rapid expansion of the commercial media sector VLV believes that funds available to public service broadcasters should be increased not decreased, to ensure that the UK's public service content can complement the range of programmes and services available as a result of new, digital technology. We are not suggesting this should be funded by increasing the Licence Fee, but urge the Government to explore other methods, such as industry levies, to preserve a truly plural PSB landscape in the UK.

VLV welcomes plans to update the remit of Channel 4 to 're-invent its

public purposes for the digital age'. But while Digital Britain wants the new remit for Channel 4 to include a solid commitment to children's content, with priority for older children, it is not yet clear how that obligation is to be adequately funded.

Concerns for radio

Richard Lindley also expressed VLV's concerns for the Report's proposals on radio in the UK, saying: 'We are surprised about the announcement that by 2013 the analogue radio signal will be turned off — despite Government assurances that there were no plans to make such a move. There is still argument as to whether the DAB system is the best way forward for digital radio. Many older listeners for whom their analogue radios are a vital link with the outside world will look on this proposal with alarm.

The hard copy version of Digital Britain weighs a ton, but is light on solutions to the problem currently plaguing British broadcasting — how to maintain high quality programmes on ITV, Channel 4 and Five, when the advertising that used to pay for these is disappearing to digital channels and services on the internet.

Digital Britain does not have new ideas about how to replace that money. Lord Carter has no hesitation in proposing a levy on telephone lines to help pay for the digital communications network, so why didn't he consider whether a levy might be a way to fund PSB on commercial television?

VLV has always been committed to plurality — the idea that it's wrong to have

only the BBC doing PSB and important that there should be other broadcasters competing with it. But the BBC is now rich from Licence Fee income and commercial broadcasters are relatively poor. When they cannot afford quality any more (except perhaps in big-audience entertainment or sports) plurality disappears. If we want it to continue, says Lord Carter, we'd best take money from the TV Licence Fee income.

VLV has always been against any part of the Licence Fee going to anyone other than the BBC. If it happens once, the argument goes, it will happen again. But what do we do now, when the BBC may end up as our only public service broadcaster, with other channels only operating as commercial companies? Do we take money from the BBC for them? Or will that simply damage the BBC.

There is now a real debate about this hugely important issue. For fifty years — since ITV began — British broadcasting has been a tremendous success, and we must not throw that away. The VLV Board is now actively debating the best way to preserve it.

The Government wants a new digital network — the 'pipes'. That must not mean that we stop caring about the quality of the programmes they carry.

RICHARD LINDLEY

THE NEW MINISTER



VLV wishes Mr. Bradshaw well. We hope his previous experience will help him find a way to sustain public service broadcasting outside the BBC, as well as within it.

A TV speech audibility study

This independent research, supported by VLV, has recently been the subject of a flurry of media coverage. The directors are a past BBC financial controller, an audience researcher and a broadcast audio engineer.

The project is about establishing empirically to what extent background sound effects to TV programmes enhance or detract from audibility of speech — across the principal Freeview channels: BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Five. For years there have been complaints about the inaudibility of speech in TV programmes — usually but not solely arising from background music.

Part of the problem is that many programme makers and, perhaps more importantly, programme commissioners, take it for granted that background music and sound effects are essential ingredients in almost any programme, to achieve its audience potential. The research will be testing this assumption. It will involve deploying a large sample of the adult population to report on the extent to which background sounds create difficulties in hearing foreground speech.

TWO RESEARCH PROJECTS

An audio analysis will then be carried out of programme instances where speech intelligibility is found to pose problems for some people: type of foreground speech, type of background sound effects, relative volume between the two. From this exercise will emerge Sound Mixing Guidelines for programme makers to deploy.

The directors are delighted to have obtained BBC participation — they have generously offered their online Panel of Viewers for the data collection — at no charge. However, three quarters of 65+ do not use the internet and will not therefore be covered by this Panel. Further, they will tend to be older and to have poorer hearing than those who do use the internet. The plan is, therefore, to mount a supplementary exercise amongst 65+s who do not use the internet. Funding will be sought over the coming months — principally from a grant foundation.

Dick Bates, Peter Menneer (research technical director and VLV member), **David Walker**

TV sound for the hearing impaired

Several years ago I ran an ITC/Ofcom funded research project aimed at improving TV sound for hearing impaired people. The Clean Audio Project results led to the formation of the UK Clean Audio Forum, made up of broadcasters and technology providers. The group submitted recommendations to standard bodies and the work is incorporated in international guidelines.

I have since been in contact with Dolby Labs, who provide the audio technology for all domestic audio/video equipment. They have followed up this work and developed a 'smarter' method for improving TV sound which they would like University of Salford to independently assess. There is every likelihood that successful assessment will lead to the inclusion of a 'Clean Audio' remote control button on the next generation of Dolby equipped set top boxes, DVD players etc.

As part of the assessment process I have to recruit around 60 participants to assist us with testing. I wondered if VLV members could help? It will mean 2-3 visits to Salford for which we can provide around £15 travel expenses per visit, or a little more.

Ben Shirley, University of Salford
tel. 0161 295452, www.acoustics.salford.ac.uk

Spring Conference report

Michael Grade

Those who still believe in fairies may have hoped that Michael Grade would use the VLV Spring Conference in April to restore our faith in ITV as a viable alternative to the BBC. His speech, a week after his resignation as CEO, and two days after OFCOM had confirmed the network was pulling out of regional news provision was, however, predictably bleak.

Mr Grade called for competition of 'scale' to take on the BBC while busily withdrawing his own forces from the field: 'We can't say across which areas we can provide competition. Those days are over.' He suggested the only way of funding alternative news coverage was top slicing, an argument that had VLV member, Professor **Sylvia Harvey**, observing: 'It is only midday and we have already had three different calls on the licence fee.'

He provided a public assurance that alternative news providers could use existing regional news slots on Channel 3, and that ITV's transmitters have the capacity to split up to 80 ways, providing truly localised news. The high point was his playing of a clip from *Britain's Got Talent* — the moment **Susan Boyle**, an innocent abroad, entrances a cynical audience with a song from *Les Misérables*.

Colette Bowe

OFCOM's new Chair used her maiden speech to throw down a broadcasting gauntlet. Colette Bowe told the conference that continued disaggregation of the Licence Fee could mean that instead of creating a rival to take on the BBC, there would be 'two failed organisations'. She was unwilling, however, to make top slicing an OFCOM issue. 'The decision,' she said, 'is one an elected government has to make.'

Earlier, however, Ms Bowe suggested that the UK, even in the throes of recession, must have alternative means of fundraising. The BBC had improved dramatically when ITV entered the arena, and serious competition was vital to the maintenance of quality PSB. We remained, she pointed out, 'a big, rich country with a highly developed civil society. It can't be beyond our wit to find a way of financing or committing to finance the national treasure that is the BBC and other sources of PSB.'

She was keen to emphasise the importance of VLV as a vehicle for debate, asking: 'How are we going to get this up as a campaign?' Her challenge built on an earlier admission that: 'We could do more to work together with people who speak directly for the listeners and viewers, which this organisation does.'

SHYAMA PERERA

RADIO'S ROLE IN CHILDREN'S LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Following the BBC Trust's complaint about poor value for the children's radio budget, executives have axed 'Go4It' — the last half hour for young listeners on mainstream PSB networks. Inappropriate scheduling and poor audience figures prompted the move which caused widespread concern among parents, teachers and children alike. Children's listening needs are on the agenda again with prominent educators calling for a dedicated radio network for the young.

In a Lords' debate about children and families, Baroness Warnock cited increasing language deficit exposed in the Bercow Report and Primary Curriculum Review and called for radio to be factored into the *Every Child a Talker* scheme: 'Nothing is more important to a child's future

wellbeing than confident communication'.

The BBC Trust wants 'practical partnerships' with independent and voluntary organisations to address a PSB funding gap of up to £235 million and a children's radio partnership has been proposed. The blueprint, code-named *Sound Start*, has gone to the BBC Trust and Executive and the Government, pending appointment of the Communication Champion and Communication Council.

The service would pilot on one of the vacant DAB networks, alongside *Every Child a Talker* and SLCN (*Special Language and Communications Needs*) Action Plan, with an evaluation of radio's role in children's play and learning, to be published before the National Year of Speech, Language and Communication in 2011-12.

SUSAN STRANKS, coordinator of the *National Campaign for Children's Radio* and member of the *Sound Start* working group chaired by Baroness Warnock.

EU Kids Online

In June researchers, policy makers, industry, educators and NGOs gathered at the LSE for an international conference celebrating the EU Kids Online project. This 21-country network, directed by Professor **Sonia Livingstone** of the LSE, and VLV board member, presented the results of three years' research.

EU Kids Online, funded by the EC's *Safer Internet Programme*, brings the collective expertise of a pan-European body to examine the availability and key gaps in research into children and the internet, producing comparative findings and policy recommendations.

Christine Kormann of the EC commended the network for a successful project, asserting that its findings would feed into the *Safer Internet Programme*. Professor Livingstone announced EU Kids Online II (2009-2011), a two-year EC funded project geared to produce robust, new, relevant and comparable findings at individual and comparable levels. This will survey children and parents across Europe, asking about online risks, degrees of vulnerability, the effectiveness of parental strategies and awareness-raising, children's coping responses to risk and their media literacies.

The BBC Editorial Complaints Unit

On a hot April afternoon a group of VLV stalwarts visited White City to learn more about the importance the BBC and BBC Trust attach to listener and viewer complaints. **Fraser Steel**, head of BBC Editorial complaints, and BBC Trust's **Francesca O'Brien**, head of Editorial, explained how, hopefully, resolution is delivered. In principle, complaints are resolved by the programme makers. If not satisfactory the Editorial Complaints Unit becomes involved and the third stage is the BBC Trust. We were left with plenty to consider, including the fact that while complaints are ongoing the BBC get no benefit from delaying resolution, not least because of the effect on scheduling repeats and halting production of DVDs handled by BBC Worldwide.

TIM BOURNE

CHILDREN'S CONFERENCE

Brave New World? Children's Media Beyond Television

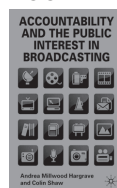


Child psychologist Professor **Tanya Byron** will be the keynote speaker at VLV's 15th annual conference on Children's Broadcasting, which will be held on **Thursday 12 November at the Geological Society, Piccadilly**. Professor Byron, a regular broadcaster and writer on children and the media, was the author of the government-commissioned *The Byron Review: Safer Children in a Digital World* and sat on the Digital Britain advisory board.

The conference will examine the possibilities and hazards of the new world of the internet, video games, mobile phones and interactivity. There are opportunities for public service in all these areas, but to what extent are these being grasped? How are the dangers being assessed, and what methods can be employed to ensure safety? Creativity is being encouraged in user-generated material, but how is this being moderated? Graphic examples of how these new media are employed will include the latest research on what children are experiencing, and discuss the issues raised by this brave new world of cyberspace.

LEWIS RUDD

BOOK REVIEW



Accountability and the Public Interest in Broadcasting

by Andrea Millwood Hargrave and Colin Shaw. Published by Palgrave Macmillan, price £50

Andrea Millwood Hargrave is DG at the International Institute of Communications. Colin Shaw CBE was the BBC's Chief Secretary, Director of TV at the IBA and Founder-Director of the Broadcasting Standards Council.

In the late 20th century, broadcasting experienced immense and rapid change as a familiar and relatively stable ecology, regulated in the public interest, became a highly competitive market place. Regimes were thrown into disorder in the face of the explosion of new services. The impact was worldwide, affecting governments, broadcasters, and especially their audiences. This book, based on interviews with key players in India, Australia, the USA and the UK, reveals a wide range of opinion on topics which not only affect broadcasting services in these countries, but have profound implications for their democracies.

NATIONS

Some 60 members gathered at the Scottish Storytelling Centre (Netherbow Theatre), Edinburgh in May to attend VLV's 18th Scottish conference. The event was chaired by **Richard Lindley** and **Matthew Hibberd** and speakers included **Jeremy Peat** BBC Trustee for Scotland, **Bobby Hain** STV, **Donald Campbell** MG Alba, **Alan Stewart** OFCOM, **Dave Rushton** Institute of Local TV, **John Ritchie** Black Diamond FM and **Stewart Lochhead** Leith FM.



Jeremy Peat (left) discussed the plans for an increase in BBC Network production in Scotland and improvements in reporting the nations of the UK

which resulted from the Anthony King report. There was no room for complacency but some evidence of the BBC responding more fully to the needs of viewers and listeners in Scotland.

Bobby Hain went through the changes to STV which resulted from the arrival of new management and a new strategy. The rebranding of the business and a clearer focus on serving Scotland needed to be set alongside challenges resulting from the changing nature of business models in television. STV had established local news bulletins but needed some element of funding support to set against the overall costs of reporting the news, and was bidding to be part of the proposed pilot in Scotland of an independently funded local news consortium. It was clear from the views of members afterwards that this would be a contentious development — if it came about.

Donald Campbell recounted the very successful launch of BBC Alba (the Gaelic channel) and excellent audience reach and appreciation data which validated the decision to go ahead with this much needed provision. He asked members to keep in touch with the next stage of The BBC Trust approval process, in particular to press for the channel to be available on Freeview. This request was warmly endorsed.

GROUP PORTRAIT OF THE VLV AWARD WINNERS



Taken in the Geological Society after the Awards Ceremony. Back row from left: David Reynolds, Edward Stourton, Paul Lewis, Lindsey Mack, Sarah Montague, Phil Grabsky, Tim Martin. Richard Vadon is between Stourton and Lewis. Front row from left: Leslie

McAlpine, Sue Ellis, Sonali Shah, Sue Western, Jocelyn Hay, Leslie Burrage of Roberts Radio, Anne Pivcevic, Lisa Osborne. Sinead Rocks is between Ellis and Shah. Sarah Montague presented the engraved vases. And the winners were...

RADIO

Best Radio Programme: MONEY BOX represented by presenter Paul Lewis, Asst. Editor BBC Business Programmes Richard Vadon, producer Diane Richardson and reporter Samantha Washington.

Best New Radio Programme: AMERICA — EMPIRE OF LIBERTY writer and presenter Professor David Reynolds, series producer Leslie McAlpine, producer Sue Ellis, researcher Polly Hope and studio manager Drew Leckie.

Best Individual Contribution to Radio: EDWARD STOURTON

TELEVISION

Best Television Programme: NATURAL WORLD series editor Tim Martin and script consultant Sue Western

Best New Television Programme: LITTLE DORRIT executive producer Anne Pivcevic and producer Lisa Osborne

Best Children's Television Programme: NEWSROUND editor Sinead Rocks and presenter Sonali Shah

Best Individual Contribution to Television: EVAN DAVIS who was unable to attend but sent a clip.

SPECIAL

VLV's Naomi Sargent Educational Award: PHIL GRABSKY cinema and TV film-maker for C5 and Sky Arts

VLV's Roberts Radio Special Award: LINDSEY MACK for her work through the BBC on DAB radio.

The second session examined the possibilities offered by local community radio and TV consortia. It argued that after many missed opportunities, Scottish and UK policy makers and regulators now had a new chance to support local broadcasting initiatives, especially when commercial radio and TV channels were struggling to support local and regional news services. Alan Stewart discussed OFCOM's work in

Scotland, focusing on the second public service broadcasting review. There was also some attention to the question of the Scottish Digital Network as recommended by the Scottish Broadcasting Commission chaired by Blair Jenkins who spoke at last year's conference. Members concluded that the debates remained live and urgent and VLV in and beyond Scotland would continue to be a necessary and important voice.

Letters to the Editor

SWITCHING OFF FM

The publication of *Online Britain* induced feelings of horror in me in many respects... One of my greatest concerns is the removal of national radio services from FM transmission. I do not object to Digital transmission of radio networks as such, but to their removal from a medium of higher quality than DAB, for those listeners who wish to have access to superior technical quality when listening to serious artistic programming (music of all types and radio drama and features). Digital would be an acceptable alternative to FM only if it were linear P.C.M. (non data-compressed) of a bit rate approaching that of CD quality.

I hope that VLV will most strongly oppose the switch-off of FM radio.

Derek Horsman, Northolt, Middx.

USING NEW MEDIA

Having read the latest VLV Bulletin, I am 'writing' to ask if you would kindly keep me informed of any future London event on this theme. **Hugh Wilman**, by e-mail

ENLIGHTENING

I, and Miss Hicks, attended the visit to Ofcom. We found it very interesting. In fact I believe both of us understood even the technical aspects of some of the new developments coming on line.

Ann Rabbitt, London NW10

Letters do not necessarily represent the views of the Association and may be shortened for publication.

Deadline for next issue:

7 October 2009

Write, fax or e-mail your letters to the Editor at: info@vlv.org.uk

THE VISIT to Ofcom in March was hosted by **Philip Graf**, vice-chairman, and chair of the Content Board. First there was a detailed presentation by **Steve Gettings**, who specialises in data collected by Ofcom about who uses various communications technologies and why.

Some random statistics: while the number of viewers to the five terrestrial channels had declined, their total share had remained constant as there was an equivalent increase in those using digital channels from the same broadcasters; 40% of the population has access to digital radio while 3.7 million download a radio pod-cast every week; there is evidence that the

HOW THE OVER 50s CAN GET TO GRIPS WITH DIGITAL BROADCASTING AND THE NEW MEDIA



Left to right: Simon Lewis of WAYVE, broadcaster Sandy Chalmers, BT Futurologist Robin Mannings, Debbie Brixey of Digital Unite and newscaster Martyn Lewis.

Over 200 people crammed into VLV's **Making the Most of New Media** in April, despite it coinciding with demonstrations against the G20 Summit and a forced move at the last minute from BT's Conference Centre in the City of London to a quieter venue in Covent Garden. Yet still there were more than 70 on the waiting list.

The conference, supported by Ofcom and BT, aimed to de-mystify digital technology as switch-over to digital TV proceeds, and in the light of the Government's desire for a Digital Britain by 2012 in which every household is linked to broadband. We also wanted to show that the new technologies bring many benefits.

The BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Sky took part, chaired by **Roger Bolton**. Ofcom presented research on attitudes to, and take up of, new services; NIACE, Digital Unite, UK Online and **Mike Cushman** from the LSE explained how people could learn more about the new technology; while, under the watchful eye of **Evan Davis** of Dragon's Den, the internet service providers BT, Google and Vodafone looked to the new generation broadband and convergence of mobile telephony with existing technology.

Perhaps the most memorable session, however, was when former newscaster **Martyn Lewis**, and broadcaster **Sandy Chalmers** (standing in for **Patricia Routledge** who wasn't well) — in link-ups to viewers in France and Scotland — showed how you no longer need a keyboard to access a computer or the web, but can use Dragon's new voice-activated software. Or, even simpler, just a stylus to write messages on the small, portable screen being developed by WAYVE, to send or receive emails and photos to family and friends worldwide.

Despite the last-minute changes, we were so pleased with feedback from the event that we are planning to send a response to the Digital Britain report and hope to arrange follow-up events outside London.

JOCELYN HAY

subscription broadcasters are surviving the economic downturn as viewers opt to spend money on staying at home.

The second half of the morning was spent in a demonstration room being shown the current and new technologies that might become widely available. Not just equipment but various ways of receiving programmes were explained: the conventional ariel or satellite dish, a

broadband connection and transmitting the programmes around the home, high-definition broadcasts and next generation HD. We donned spectacles to sample 3D TV, listened to an Australian radio station on a DAB radio with a wi-fi link to the internet. Computer terminals became televisions and televisions computer terminals. This was very a successful visit.

ROBERT CLARK

Advertisements

Please refer to VLV when responding to advertisements. VLV Ltd cannot accept any liability or complaint in regard to the following offers. The charge for classified ads is 30p per word, 20p for members. Please send typed copy with a cheque payable to VLV Ltd. For display space please contact Linda Forbes on 01474 352835.

VLV GIFT MEMBERSHIP

Give a VLV membership as a gift to a friend or relative. We will add an appropriate greetings card and a FREE copy of the Radio or TV User's Guide. Fill out the subscription form below and state which publication and card type you would prefer.



crimson cats
audio books

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Diary Dates

Wednesday, 7 October

VLV Celebrates 25 years of campaigning for the best in British broadcasting
6.30-8.30pm at BAFTA*
195 Piccadilly, London W1
*British Academy of Film and Television Arts

Thursday, 22 October

Visit to ITN Newsroom, London WC1, 12 noon

Tuesday, 27 October

Visit to BBC Natural History Unit, Bristol, 2pm

Thursday, 12 November

15th Annual Conference of the VLV Forum for Children's Broadcasting (with support from the British Board of Film Classification). *Brave New World? Children's Media Beyond Television.* At the Geological Society, Piccadilly, London W1 (opposite Fortnum's) 9.30-4.15pm (registration 9.15am).

Thursday, 26 November

VLV's 27th Annual Autumn Conference. At the Geological Society, Piccadilly, London W1 10.30-3.30pm (registration 10am). Followed by VLV Ltd's 7th AGM at 4pm. Visit to Broadcasting House, London W1, date tbc.

For tickets and enquiries please contact:

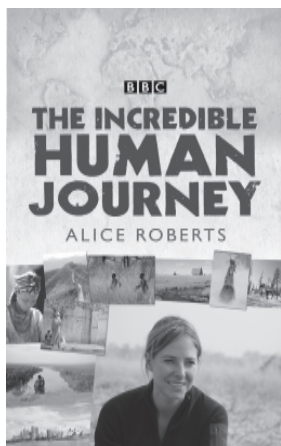
Linda Forbes

tel: 01474 352835 email:

linda.forbes@vlv.org.uk or

visit www.vlv.org.uk.

SUMMER COMPETITION



WIN A COPY OF ALICE ROBERTS' *THE INCREDIBLE HUMAN JOURNEY*

Published by Bloomsbury by arrangement with the BBC. £20 hardback

This engagingly written and illustrated account of Alice's travels, to try to find out and film how *homo sapiens* spread beyond Africa and around the world, draws on the latest genetic and archaeological discoveries. She is a medical doctor and lecturer, with a PhD in palaeopathology — the study of disease in ancient bones.

Q: Do scientists generally agree that *homo sapiens* first appeared in Africa 800,000, 200,000 or 70,000 years ago?

Replies on a postcard to Summer Competition, VLV, PO Box 401, Gravesend DA12 9FY or by e-mail to info@vlv.org.uk by 1 October 2009. The winner of VLV's Spring Competition for Jeremy Paxman's *The Victorians* was **Professor Bob Usherwood from Sheffield.**



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